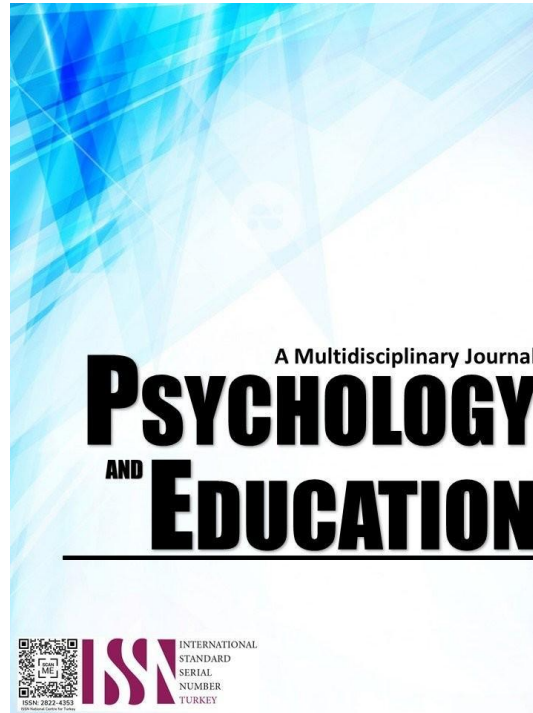


ETHOS, PATHOS, AND LOGOS: EXAMINING THE RHETORICAL STRATEGIES OF EMPOWERMENT NARRATIVES USING DISCOURSE ANALYSIS



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Ethos, Pathos, and Logos: Examining the Rhetorical Strategies of Empowerment Narratives Using Discourse Analysis

Aileen D. Escote,* Michelle T. Viña

For affiliations and correspondence, see the last page.

Abstract

This study examines how regional beauty queens shape persuasive narratives that empower communities and inspire action, with a focus on how these narratives are constructed with ethos, pathos, and logos on the rhetorical strategies employed by contestants in the Mutya ng Cotabato pageants from 2022 to 2024. Using discourse analysis as its primary method, the study investigates coronation night speeches to understand how beauty queens use language, personal stories, emotional appeal, and logical reasoning to advocate for social causes and assert leadership. The findings show that ethos is the most frequently used strategy, as candidates often draw from personal experiences and connections with credible institutions to build trust and authenticity. Pathos follows closely, with contestants using vivid imagery, cultural references, and emotional storytelling to foster unity and pride among Cotabateños. While logos appears less often, it plays a critical role in strengthening arguments with evidence and rational perspectives on social issues. This study adds to the growing recognition of beauty pageants as platforms for civic engagement and meaningful public discourse. By analyzing how rhetorical strategies are employed, the study offers a fresh perspective on pageantry—not just as a showcase of beauty, but as a space where young women develop their voices as advocates and leaders. Ultimately, the findings illustrate how beauty queens are evolving into influential public figures, capable of inspiring change and promoting empowerment within and beyond their communities.

Keywords: *beauty pageants, ethos, empowerment narratives, logos, pathos, rhetorical strategies*

Introduction

The narratives of beauty queens have evolved from traditional notions of beauty to stories of advocacy and empowerment. Pageants like Mutya ng Cotabato now offer a platform for contestants to voice their personal and social advocacies, moving beyond elegance to influence and purpose. Using rhetorical strategies—ethos, pathos, and logos—contestants present themselves as credible, emotionally connected, and logically sound advocates for change (Gill, 2020; Aristotle, trans. 2007).

These narratives extend beyond the stage into digital platforms, where beauty queens continue their advocacy and connect with wider audiences. Most existing study focuses on national or international pageants (Parameswaran & Cardoza, 2009), overlooking localized, culturally rooted expressions of advocacy in regional contests like Mutya ng Cotabato. This lack of study highlights the need to examine the persuasive strategies used by beauty queens representing their communities (Rodriguez, 2023).

Despite this transformation, a key gap remains in understanding how regional beauty queens—particularly in pageants like Mutya ng Cotabato—strategically use rhetorical appeals to express their views on complex issues. While national-level study highlights the evolving role of pageant contestants, little attention has been given to how ethos, pathos, and logos are used at the regional level (Mendoza, 2023). Few studies examine the linguistic structures and discourse styles shaped by local culture and socio-political realities. Some contestants deliver well-formed arguments, but others fall into vague or generic responses, weakening their credibility and message impact. This highlights the need to better understand how rhetorical strategies can effectively enhance advocacy and influence public perception.

This study examines how regional beauty queens shape persuasive narratives that empower communities and inspire action, focusing on their rhetorical strategies to connect with audiences meaningfully. Ultimately, it addresses the limited literature on regional pageants and offers a more profound, human-centered understanding of their role in shaping empowerment through rhetoric.

Research Questions

The study analyzed the rhetorical strategies employed by beauty queens, focusing on their use of ethos, pathos, and logos. Specifically, it answered the following questions:

1. How do beauty queens establish credibility and trustworthiness (ethos) in their speeches?
2. How do beauty queens employ emotional appeals (pathos) to resonate with their audience?
3. How do beauty queens use logical reasoning (logos) to present their advocacy on contemporary issues?

Literature Review

Persuasion and Rhetorical Strategies

Persuasion has long been recognized as a fundamental aspect of human communication, shaping attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors across various domains. As Perloff (2020) explained, persuasion involves strategically using language, reasoning, and emotional appeals to

influence audience perception and decision-making. Historically, it has played a pivotal role in public life—from political speeches and media messaging to advertising and advocacy campaigns—where communicators construct structured arguments to elicit targeted responses (Cialdini, 2001). Therefore, the ability to persuade effectively through public speaking has become essential, especially within education, leadership, and social influence (Lakoff, 2004; Davis, 2022).

To understand the structure of persuasive discourse, scholars often return to Aristotle's classical rhetorical framework—ethos, pathos, and logos—which remains a cornerstone in communication studies (Aristotle, trans. Kennedy, 2007). Ethos, pathos, and logos—rhetorical appeals rooted in ancient tradition—continue to shape the way we communicate today. Ethos highlights a speaker's credibility, pathos connects through emotion, and logos appeals to logic and reason. These elements remain vital in modern communication, especially educational leadership, civic engagement, and advocacy (Perloff, 2020; Wodak, 2021).

In today's world, persuasive communication is everywhere—from political campaigns and advertising to online activism (Cochrane, 2014). Even in the realm of beauty pageants, like Mutya ng Cotabato, contestants carefully harness these rhetorical tools. They present their advocacies through powerful storytelling, inspire their audiences, and contribute to important societal conversations.

Ethos: Establishing Credibility and Authority

The emotional and logical appeals, ethos—or the ethical appeal—pertains to a speaker's credibility and authority in delivering a persuasive message." Aristotle underscored the centrality of ethos in persuasion, asserting that audiences are more inclined to trust and be influenced by speakers they perceive as knowledgeable, experienced, and sincere (Aristotle, trans. Kennedy, 2007). In this regard, credibility is established by demonstrating expertise, integrity, and relatability, all contributing to a speaker's influence on public perception (Perloff, 2020).

In beauty pageants, ethos, or the appeal to credibility, is a vital strategy contestants use to connect with audiences and judges. Many beauty queens emphasize their academic achievements, community service, and advocacy work to establish trust and authority. These elements do more than highlight accomplishments—they present the contestants as educated, socially responsible, and capable of meaningful leadership (Parameswaran & Cardoza, 2009). By aligning with causes such as education, philanthropy, or women's empowerment, they present themselves as advocates for social change, making their messages more convincing and impactful (West, 2020).

However, credibility also stems from authenticity. Audiences are more responsive to individuals who appear genuine, relatable, and sincerely passionate about their advocacies (Gill, 2020). When contestants share personal stories or lived experiences, they create a stronger emotional connection with listeners. These narratives reveal their values and beliefs, showing that their causes are not just part of a performance but are profoundly personal and purpose-driven (Cochrane, 2014).

Pathos: Emotional Appeal and Audience Engagement

Beyond credibility and logic, pathos, or emotional appeal, plays a powerful role in inspiring and connecting with an audience. It taps into shared human emotions—such as empathy, compassion, and hope—to build a deeper sense of understanding and engagement (Lakoff, 2004). When used effectively, pathos can turn a speech into an experience, making the audience feel the urgency, the heart, and the vision behind the speaker's words. Studies show that emotional storytelling significantly enhances message retention and audience engagement, as people are more likely to connect with messages that resonate with their personal experiences and values (Cochrane, 2014).

Building on this, pathos continues to be one of the most powerful and widely used persuasive tools in beauty pageants. Emotional appeal helps contestants connect with their audiences on a deeper level, often leaving a lasting impression. Studies show that emotional persuasion is especially effective in advocacy because it encourages people to feel personally connected to the cause (Westen, 2007).

Speakers can inspire unity, stir action, and spark meaningful conversations by tapping into shared emotions—such as hope, compassion, or even urgency. This emotional resonance does not just amplify their message; it also gives it staying power in the hearts and minds of the audience (Perloff, 2020).

Moreover, tone, word choice, and performative elements enhance the delivery of pathos-driven messages. Study indicates that expressive language, rhetorical questions, and metaphorical imagery enhance emotional appeal (Cialdini, 2001). Beauty pageant contestants often incorporate dramatic pauses, passionate intonation, and facial expressions to amplify their message, ensuring a deeper emotional connection with the audience (Basow, 2021).

Logos: Logical Reasoning and Evidence-Based Argumentation

Equally important to persuasive discourse is logos, or logical appeal, which is a strategy that relies on facts, data, and structured reasoning to convince an audience" (Perloff, 2020). Aristotle argued that logos strengthens an argument by appealing to rationality, making it more difficult for an audience to refute (Aristotle, trans. Kennedy, 2007). Logical persuasion is used daily in political discourse, legal debates, academic writing, and advocacy efforts, where speakers present statistical evidence, expert testimonies, and logical sequencing to support their arguments (Cialdini, 2001).

In beauty pageants, contestants integrate logos-driven arguments by citing global statistics, referencing policy recommendations, and drawing from historical examples to support their advocacies (West, 2020). Study suggests that speeches with logical coherence and factual accuracy enhance speaker credibility and increase persuasion effectiveness (Perloff, 2020). For instance, contestants who address gender equality, climate change, or education reform frequently incorporate data from reputable sources to strengthen their claims (Parameswaran & Cardoza, 2009).

Empowerment Narratives in Rhetorical Discourse

Women's empowerment has long been a central theme in feminist discourse, communication studies, and sociolinguistics, particularly in examining how rhetoric shapes public perceptions of gender, leadership, and advocacy. Rhetorical discourse analysis focuses on how empowerment narratives are constructed through credibility, emotional engagement, and logical reasoning to challenge societal norms and influence audiences (Fairclough, 2003).

In recent years, modern beauty queens have increasingly used their speeches to address critical social issues such as gender equality, education, mental health, and community development, thereby transforming these competitions into meaningful spaces for public discourse (West, 2020). This transformation, in turn, aligns with the broader feminist movement, which promotes women's visibility, rhetorical agency, and empowerment through public speaking and digital media (Gill, 2020).

First and foremost, ethos, or credibility, remains a crucial rhetorical tool that allows women to establish legitimacy, expertise, and moral integrity in public discourse (Perloff, 2020). Specifically, in beauty pageants, contestants often enhance their ethos by referencing Rhetorical analysis, which provides a meaningful lens through which we can understand how women, especially in public speaking roles, assert their voices and navigate the subtle gender biases often embedded in public discourse (Gill, 2020; Parameswaran & Cardoza, 2009). In the world of beauty pageants, where empowerment speeches are a central highlight, contestants often speak passionately about values such as education, leadership, financial independence, and social justice (West, 2020).

Looking at the use of rhetorical appeals in pageantry, it is clear that contestants skillfully combine ethos, pathos, and logos to craft compelling messages. They establish credibility (ethos) by sharing their accomplishments, values, and dedication to their causes, earning trust and admiration. Through emotional appeal (pathos), they share personal stories that resonate on a deeper level, creating strong connections with their listeners.

Moreover, they use logic and evidence (logos) to ground their advocacies—whether about gender equality, climate action, or mental health—in clear, rational arguments. Together, these strategies help them compete, lead, inspire, and be a force for change.

This study uniquely focuses on the rhetorical strategies used in the Mutya ng Cotabato pageants. While national pageants are often studied for their cultural impact, local pageants remain underexplored, especially in how contestants construct empowerment narratives through ethos, pathos, and logos. By analyzing speeches from 2022 to 2024, this study addresses a clear gap in the literature, revealing how young women in North Cotabato use language not just to perform but to advocate for social change, cultural pride, and community leadership. In a setting where educational and communicative platforms are limited, this study highlights the potential of pageantry as a powerful medium for discourse, empowerment, and civic engagement.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative rhetorical analysis research design, utilizing discourse analysis as a central methodological lens to examine the rhetorical strategies of beauty queens in the Mutya ng Cotabato pageant. Rooted in the works of Michel Foucault (1972), discourse analysis is particularly suited for exploring how language, speech delivery, and social context interact to construct meaning. It is an essential approach for understanding how contestants crafted persuasive narratives using ethos, pathos, and logos. By analyzing spoken discourse in speeches, non-verbal communication, and textual elements, the study uncovered how beauty queens positioned themselves as credible advocates and influential social figures within a culturally significant event.

Respondents

The primary data for this study were derived from video presentations of the coronation nights for beauty pageants held in 2022, 2023, and 2024. Each contestant's speech revealed a unique and meaningful use of rhetorical strategies to express their advocacies and engage the audience.

Secondary data were drawn from existing literature to contextualize and support the analysis. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) emphasize how metaphors shape thought and communication, helping audiences understand abstract concepts through relatable imagery. Gass and Seiter (2018) note that vivid language enhances persuasion by amplifying emotional resonance and speaker credibility.

Perloff (2020) highlights the strategic role of pathos in fostering engagement, while Toulmin's (2003) model supports the value of logically sequenced, data-backed arguments in effective persuasion. These insights guided the evaluation of how contestants used language to communicate values, frame social issues, and inspire action.

Procedure

The data-gathering process for this study was carried out with careful planning, ethical consideration, and formal approval at each stage. The research process began with the preparation of an official letter addressed to the Dean of the Graduate School. In this letter, the researcher clearly outlined the study's objectives, the methodological approach, and the scholarly relevance of analyzing discourse within the context of beauty pageants. The request emphasized the academic significance of the research and respectfully sought approval to begin data collection. Upon receiving the Dean's endorsement, the researcher proceeded to submit a second formal request to the administrative office of the Province of North Cotabato.

In the request, the researcher highlighted the value of the study and its compliance with ethical research standards and assured that the data collection process would be carried out responsibly and without disruption. Once the provincial government issued official clearance, the researcher contacted the Mutya ng Cotabato pageant director to formally request access to video recordings of the coronation night speeches from 2022 to 2024.

The researcher formally committed that all collected data used strictly for academic-related purposes and handled under ethical and documentation guidelines. Upon approval, the researcher obtained the recordings and manually transcribed the speeches without existing transcripts. These transcripts formed the primary dataset for the study's content and discourse analysis, providing the foundation for examining how contestants in Mutya ng Cotabato construct persuasive narratives within the unique cultural and social landscape of North Cotabato.

Data Analysis

This study applies Lunsford's (2010) Rhetorical Framework to analyze the speeches of beauty queens from the Mutya ng Cotabato pageant (2022–2024), focusing on how contestants used ethos, pathos, and logos to persuade their audiences. Each speech was examined to understand how contestants built credibility through personal narratives and affiliations (ethos), stirred emotional responses (pathos), and presented logical arguments or factual evidence to support their advocacies (logos). The speeches were then coded according to the dominant rhetorical appeal, allowing the researcher to identify recurring patterns in how each contestant framed her message and connected with her audience.

Ethical Considerations

In this study, the researcher adheres to the rhetorical appeals of beauty queens while ensuring that several ethical considerations are meticulously followed, guaranteeing the protection and respect of all participants involved.

Ensuring participants' privacy is fundamental in qualitative research and discourse analysis. Best practices in research ethics emphasize that identifying information should be anonymized or removed to protect participants from potential harm (Wiles et al., 2008). This study assigns pseudonyms, and all data are securely stored to prevent unauthorized access, aligning with established ethical protocols for handling sensitive data in rhetorical and discourse studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Confidentiality is particularly important when analyzing public speeches and personal narratives, as misrepresentation or unauthorized disclosure could impact participants' reputations and advocacy work (Tracy, 2020).

Results and Discussion

This section presents the study's findings by analyzing the rhetorical strategies (ethos, pathos, logos) in the empowerment narratives of beauty queens.

Table 1 summarizes the use of rhetorical strategies—Ethos, Pathos, and Logos—by Mutya ng Cotabato candidates from 2022 to 2024.

Table 1. *Frequency Count of Rhetorical Strategies (Ethos, Pathos, Logos) in Candidates' Responses*

Rhetorical Strategies	Number of Rhetorical Strategies Produced			Total
	Mutya ng Cotabato 2022	Mutya ng Cotabato 2023	Mutya ng Cotabato 2024	
Ethos	5	7	13	25
Pathos	5	7	4	16
Logos	1	4	5	10

The data presented in Table 1 reveal that ethos emerged as the most frequently employed rhetorical strategy among the candidates of the Mutya ng Cotabato pageants from 2022 to 2024, appearing 25 times. Pathos follows this with 16 occurrences and logos with 10. These results indicate a strategic preference for establishing credibility and trustworthiness, suggesting that contestants prioritize presenting themselves as competent, reliable, and morally aligned advocates.

The prevalence of ethos as the dominant rhetorical strategy highlights the critical role of character-based persuasion in regional pageantry. Contestants frequently anchored their responses in personal experiences, leadership roles, and affiliations with credible individuals such as community leaders and government officials. This pattern underscores their intent to present themselves as contestants, credible advocates, and role models. This aligns with Aristotle's classical rhetorical theory, which posits that ethos is foundational to persuasion because audiences are more likely to trust speakers who exhibit moral character and credibility (Aristotle,

trans. 2007).

In addition, the significant presence of pathos, identified 16 times, contributes to the emotional appeal and resonance of the candidates' speeches. This rhetorical approach enables contestants to forge connections with the audience by expressing cultural pride, regional identity, and emotional authenticity. Many utilized vivid language, metaphors, and storytelling to evoke shared values and lived experiences, supporting Nussbaum's (2001) claim that emotional engagement is essential in building empathy and solidarity.

Although logos was the least utilized rhetorical strategy, with only 10 instances, its presence nonetheless signals the contestants' effort to support their arguments with logical reasoning. For instance, candidates incorporated examples of local development, discussed economic strategies like agri-tourism, and cited actionable plans for social progress. This suggests an intention to appeal not only to emotion or personal credibility but also to reason and rationality.

To further illustrate, Table 2 provides a categorized analysis of the rhetorical strategies employed by the Mutya ng Cotabato candidates, structured around Aristotle's rhetorical strategies—ethos, pathos, and logos. Specifically, it illustrates how contestants established credibility through personal experience and references to credentials, elicited emotional engagement through vivid language and metaphors, and reinforced their arguments with logical examples and cause-and-effect reasoning to strengthen their advocacy.

Table 2 summarizes the rhetorical strategies in the empowerment narratives.

Table 2. *Rhetorical Strategies in the Empowerment Narratives*

<i>Ethos</i>		
	Categories	Sample Responses/Excerpts
	Personal Experience/and or Interest in the Topic	"Ladies and gentlemen, I am a fruit of this Summer Kids Peace Camp, a product of Make Barangayan and Make 2.0 Banisilan, which is the Municipal advocate for Kabataan Empowerment." (Mutya G)
	References to Credible Individuals	...our government with the help of Honorable Governor Emmylou "Lala" Taliño-Mendoza, promotes initiatives and policies that creates orientations for our barangay to use this platform as a sustainable progress and that they can use Agri-tourism for their sustainable livelihood." (Mutya I)
	References to Skills and Titles	"And as your reigning Ms. Philippines Earth Mindanao 2024 Water, I am an actually a practice of sustainable practices focusing on our agriculture and tourism ..." (Mutya I)
<i>Pathos</i>		
	Vivid Language through Imagery	"Indeed, no and where no no no and no matter what and wherever the world takes me, I will always go back to Cotabato because my life begins here as a proud Cotabateña." (Mutya G)
	Vivid Language through Metaphor	"And it needs our roller-coaster experiences; we wake up each day telling ourselves, Sa Pag Kultura at Pagkakaisa, Cotabateño ako." (Mutya H)
	Vivid Language through Word Choice	"And that's why as we work hand in hand to champion good governance and to champion in promoting our rich culture, we can all say that Serbispong Totoo, para sa'yo 'to mahal kong dakilang Cotabato.'" (Mutya F)
<i>Logos</i>		
	Cause-and-effect Argument	"That's why, I can see this province 10 years from now a more progressives because therefore in a diverse culture that we have, it is only showing by appreciation, respect, tolerance, and acceptance of different cultures." (Mutya H)
	Examples	"We all know that Cotabato is a melting pot of culture. We are celebrating different traditions, different cultures." (Mutya F)

Credibility and Trustworthiness (Ethos) in Empowerment Narratives

Ethos, a rhetorical appeal introduced by Aristotle, refers to the credibility, character, and trustworthiness a speaker establishes to persuade an audience (Aristotle, trans. 2007). It is built through the speaker's perceived competence, integrity, and connection to the subject matter. In public speaking and discourse, ethos can be demonstrated by highlighting expertise, moral character, or personal experiences that align with the discussed topic (Heinrichs, 2017). Establishing ethos is crucial in enhancing the speaker's persuasiveness, as audiences are more likely to accept arguments from someone they perceive as knowledgeable, authentic, and sincere. Effective use of ethos often involves sharing personal involvement, professional background, or alignment with shared values to foster trust and connection with the audience. This includes demonstrating personal experience and/or interest in the topic, citing credible individuals or authorities, and referencing one's skills, achievements, or titles, all of which help affirm the speaker's authority and integrity in addressing the issue.

Personal Experience and/or Interest in the Topic

Personal experience and individual interest play a crucial role in establishing ethos, as defined by Aristotle, which centers on the speaker's credibility and moral character (Aristotle, trans. 2007). In the Mutya ng Cotabato pageant, many candidates drew upon their

lived experiences and genuine involvement in community initiatives to strengthen their persuasive appeal. Their participation in youth empowerment programs, cultural preservation efforts, and environmental campaigns served as proof of advocacy and a testament to their personal values and dedication. This alignment between lived experience and advocacy created a sense of authenticity, fostering audience trust and reinforcing the candidates' credibility as informed and sincere representatives of their causes.

The following excerpts are:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I am a fruit of this Summer Kids Peace Camp, a product of Make Barangayan and Make 2.0 Banisilan, which is the Municipal advocate for Kabataan Empowerment." (Mutya G)

The statements made by the candidates in the Mutya ng Cotabato pageant exemplify the strategic use of rhetorical strategies—ethos (credibility), to establish their advocacy, leadership, and vision for progress. From an expert perspective, these rhetorical techniques align with established persuasion and public speaking theories, reinforcing that beauty queens are influential communicators and advocates for change. According to Perloff (2020), effective persuasion requires a balance of credibility, emotional engagement, and logical reasoning, which the candidates demonstrated in their responses. Their speeches reflected a shift from traditional beauty pageantry to a platform for public discourse and empowerment, highlighting their role as leaders in social transformation.

The statements from candidates in the Mutya ng Cotabato pageant exemplify the intentional use of ethos to establish credibility, purpose, and vision. These rhetorical strategies reflect personal conviction and serve as powerful communication tools to shape public perception and inspire civic engagement. From a communication standpoint, these responses reveal how contestants connect personal experience with advocacy, thereby projecting leadership and authenticity. According to Perloff (2020), effective persuasion balances credibility, emotion, and logical standards the candidates appeared to meet through their carefully crafted messages. For instance, Mutya G's declaration—"I am a fruit of this Summer Kids Peace Camp, a product of Make Barangayan and Make 2.0 Banisilan"—demonstrates deep involvement in local youth initiatives. This statement carries meaning beyond a simple affiliation; it communicates rootedness in community-based empowerment. Her follow-up statement—envisioning Cotabato as a progressive province and using the pageant as a platform to "showcase my purpose"—further illustrates her self-awareness as a change agent, not just a contestant. As Cialdini (2001) explains, personal involvement enhances a speaker's persuasive credibility, making the advocacy more believable and impactful.

References to Credible Individuals

In referencing credible individuals, speakers strategically enhance their ethos—rhetorical strategies centered on credibility and moral character—as defined by Aristotle (trans. 2007). Speakers borrow their authority by citing respected figures such as government officials, community leaders, or subject-matter experts and align themselves with individuals already perceived as trustworthy and competent (Heinrichs, 2017). This technique lends weight to the speaker's arguments, especially when those referenced are known for their public service, leadership, or expertise. For instance, in the Mutya ng Cotabato pageant, several candidates were key figures behind programs that shaped their advocacies. These references reinforced the speaker's connection to impactful initiatives and anchored their credibility in association with prominent leaders.

The following excerpts are:

"Those projects and programs had been implemented by our government with the initiative and leadership of our beloved governor, Governor Emmylou "Lala" Taliño-Mendoza, and her daughter, Congresswoman Alana Maria Samantha Santos." (Mutya G)

The results of the rhetorical discourse analysis revealed that several candidates in the Mutya ng Cotabato pageant consistently referenced credible individuals—particularly local leaders and government officials—in their speeches. This pattern demonstrated the dominant use of ethos as a persuasive strategy to establish their credibility and strengthen the legitimacy of their advocacies.

This means that by aligning themselves with respected figures, the candidates sought to elevate their messages' trustworthiness and perceived value. Referencing well-known personalities allowed them to portray themselves as informed speakers and individuals connected to credible community initiatives and progress. According to Aristotle (trans. 2007), ethos is a core element of persuasion because audiences are more inclined to believe a speaker who demonstrates moral character, trust, and integrity.

The implication is that referencing reputable individuals allowed the contestants to build "derived credibility," reinforcing their persuasive appeal through association. This strategy strengthens their leadership persona, especially in a regional setting where political and community affiliations resonate with local audiences. As these candidates addressed themes like youth empowerment, agriculture, tourism, and public service, the ethical alignment with trusted leaders helped validate their proposed solutions and advocacies, making them more believable and impactful.

Reference to Skills and Titles

The use of references to skills and titles is a strategic rhetorical device that enhances a speaker's credibility and strengthens the persuasiveness of their message. This technique aligns with Aristotle's concept of ethos, which emphasizes the importance of a speaker's character, competence, and authority in persuasive communication (Aristotle, trans. 2007). By highlighting relevant competencies, awards, and formal roles, speakers demonstrate their qualifications to speak on a given issue, thus reinforcing their

authority and fostering audience trust. For instance, public speakers who introduce themselves by citing accomplishments or leadership roles—such as holding a title like “Youth Ambassador” or “Ms. Earth Water” as seen in the Mutya ng Cotabato pageant—are more likely to be perceived as credible and trustworthy. As Heinrichs (2017) notes, an audience is more inclined to believe a speaker who appears competent and experienced in their field. Moreover, this appeal to professional identity and proven capability is particularly persuasive in public discourse, where the perception of reliability is essential for influencing beliefs and actions (Perloff, 2020). Therefore, referencing one's skills and titles legitimizes the speaker's voice and enhances their advocacy's emotional and intellectual impact.

The following are the excerpts:

“And as your reigning Ms. Philippines Earth Mindanao 2024 Water, I am an actually a practitioner of sustainable practices focusing on our agriculture and tourism...” (Mutya I)

The results of the rhetorical analysis show that both Mutya G and Mutya I effectively employed ethos through personal experience and references to earned titles. Mutya G highlighted her life journey and readiness to lead by stating, “Actually, I am 18, and I am now ready to empower others through my story, dedication, and determination.” At the same time, Mutya I asserted her credibility by introducing herself as “your reigning Ms. Philippines Earth Mindanao 2024 Water,” reinforcing her authority on environmental advocacy.

This means the candidates deliberately used identity markers—age, titles, and lived experience—to establish credibility and strengthen audience trust. Mutya G's mention of her youth and determination positioned her as a relatable and sincere voice of her generation. In contrast, Mutya I leveraged her prestigious title to communicate expertise, reinforcing her role as an active and informed advocate for sustainability.

The implication is that these rhetorical choices elevated the contestants' speeches from mere pageant answers to platforms for ethical leadership. By grounding their messages in personal experience and public recognition, the candidates cultivated an image of authenticity and competence—essential to influencing public perception and inspiring civic engagement.

Emotional Appeals (Pathos) to Resonate with Audience

Building on this foundation, pathos, one of Aristotle's three rhetorical strategies, is a persuasive technique that aims to evoke emotions in the audience to influence their beliefs, attitudes, or actions (Aristotle, trans. 2007). Speakers create a deeper connection with their listeners by appealing to emotions such as empathy, compassion, fear, or pride, making their message more memorable and impactful (Dillard & Shen, 2005). Emotional appeals are particularly effective when combined with vivid storytelling, relatable experiences, and powerful language that resonates with the audience's values and emotions (Nabi, 2002). This includes imagery that enhances emotional impact by painting mental pictures—for instance, describing a hopeful child's eyes filled with dreams or a struggling community rising from the ashes—stirring deep feelings in listeners. Metaphors add further depth by making abstract emotions tangible; comparing empowerment to a “rising flame” or injustice to a “storm that silences voices” invites audiences to internalize complex social experiences in symbolic terms. Additionally, strategic word choices, such as using emotionally charged terms like resilience, unity, or beloved homeland, can intensify emotional engagement, allowing the speaker to precisely guide the audience's response. These linguistic tools work together to ignite emotional resonance, making the speaker's message heard and felt and ultimately strengthening the persuasive power of their appeal. This includes vivid language, mainly through imagery, metaphor, and word choice.

Vivid Language

Vivid language employs descriptive and metaphorical expressions to create mental imagery and evoke emotions (Ortony, 1993). The vivid language in the presented statements effectively engages the audience by creating strong mental images that evoke emotions and reinforce key messages.

Vivid Language through Imagery. Vivid language, mainly through imagery, plays a crucial role in persuasive communication by stimulating the audience's senses, emotions, and imagination. When speakers paint pictures with words, they create a more immersive and emotionally resonant experience, making their messages memorable and impactful (Gass & Seiter, 2018). Using imagery in rhetorical strategy transforms speeches into emotional landscapes, where audiences can see, hear, and feel the realities being conveyed, making the message more compelling, relatable, and unforgettable.

The following are the excerpts:

“If we take care of our roots today, we will take care of the future generation that will be the torch bearers of our nation.” (Mutya I)

Mutya I revealed a strong application of pathos, with both candidates effectively using emotional appeal to evoke a sense of belonging, unity, and collective responsibility among their audience. The results showed that their speeches resonated deeply with listeners by invoking shared feelings of identity, pride, and hope. Mutya G's statement, “No matter what and wherever the world takes me, I will always go back to Cotabato because my life begins here as a proud Cotabateña,” stirred sentiments of nostalgia and cultural rootedness.

The meaning behind her message lies in its capacity to connect personal identity with community values, drawing strength from a

shared emotional landscape. Mutya I, likewise, employed metaphorical and aspirational language, stating, “We will create a Cotabato that will help the future people... grow stronger together,” and “If we take care of our roots today, we will take care of the future generation that will be the torchbearers of our nation.” These lines reflected a collective vision, fostering unity through emotionally resonant imagery.

Vivid Language through Metaphor. Vivid language, mainly through metaphor, is a powerful rhetorical strategy in persuasive discourse that transforms abstract concepts into more concrete and relatable experiences. Metaphors allow speakers to draw symbolic comparisons between seemingly unrelated ideas, helping audiences understand complex issues through familiar imagery (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). For example, referring to a community as a “garden” that must be nurtured or describing the youth as “torchbearers of the future” clarifies the message and evokes emotional and intellectual engagement. Such metaphoric expressions enrich the audience’s comprehension and create emotional resonance by linking values, struggles, and aspirations to everyday symbols.

The following are the excerpts:

“Step-by-step, we will become economic of power hub of Mindanao. Let us march together and loudly present to us in one destination. 18 localities, one province celebrating, one festivity, one pride and loudly shout-out to the world, ang serbisyong totoo ay tapat at makatao, ang serbisyong tatata ang serbisyong totoo ay ipapanalo ang bawat cotabateño.” (Mutya E)

The speeches of candidates in the Mutya ng Cotabato pageant, particularly those of Mutya H, Mutya E, and Mutya F, effectively employed metaphor as a key rhetorical strategy. Mutya H used the “roller-coaster experiences” metaphor to reflect personal and communal struggles. Mutya E emphasized unity through the metaphor of a collective journey, as seen in her call to “march together” toward a shared destination. Mutya F described Cotabato as a “melting pot of culture,” portraying it as a hub of diversity and inclusivity.

Metaphors allow the beauty queens to translate complex emotions and social experiences into personal, vivid, and relatable language. For instance, Mutya H’s reference to life as a roller coaster invited the audience to reflect on the ups and downs of their journeys, highlighting resilience and strength in the face of uncertainty. Mutya E’s metaphor of marching together evoked a powerful image of unity, purpose, and collective movement toward a shared goal. Meanwhile, Mutya F described Cotabato as a melting pot, celebrating its cultural diversity as a source of strength and harmony. These metaphors did not just decorate their speeches—they gave their advocacies emotional weight, community relevance, and poetic clarity.

Vivid Language through Word Choice. Vivid language—especially through word choice—is powerful in persuasive communication. When used effectively, language brings depth, emotion, and clarity to a message—allowing speakers to form meaningful connections with their audience. In powerful rhetoric, words do more than convey information; they spark emotion, create vivid imagery, and leave lasting impressions. This careful attention to how words are chosen and delivered transforms ordinary expressions into powerful narratives that resonate long after the speech is over. Words that carry emotional and symbolic weight—such as “resilience,” “empowerment,” “unity,” and “transformation”—are especially potent in reinforcing pathos, appealing directly to the audience’s values and aspirations (Perloff, 2020).

Ultimately, the power of word choice in pageant discourse lies in its ability to shape perceptions and build emotional bridges between speaker and audience. Through meaningful, precise language, contestants convey their advocacies and establish themselves as credible and passionate agents of change.

The following excerpts are:

“And as well, it is really important that we, Cotabateños, actively participate, especially in this Kalivungan Festival. We have to support our Governor in solidarity in order for our province to progress and even thrive more.” (Mutya D)

The statements of Mutya D, Mutya E, Mutya F, and Mutya C in the Mutya ng Cotabato pageant demonstrated the effective use of vivid language through strategic word choice. Candidates consistently used emotionally resonant terms such as “actively participate,” “support our Governor in solidarity,” and “thrive more,” as well as patriotic and value-driven phrases like “Serbisyong Tootoo ay tapat at makatao” and “mahal kong dakilang Cotabato.” These expressions created emotionally engaging narratives aligned with cultural pride and civic identity.

The contestants’ word choices went beyond simple descriptions—they reflected thoughtful rhetorical decisions designed to resonate with the audience’s values, emotions, and sense of identity. For example, Mutya E and Mutya F used emotionally charged and patriotic Filipino expressions to emphasize ideals like honesty, compassion, and public service. In contrast, Mutya C adopted a motivational tone focused on resilience and progress, inspiring hope and perseverance. These intentional choices enhanced their speeches’ emotional appeal (pathos), making their messages persuasive and deeply moving.

Using language with purpose and heart, the beauty queens of Mutya ng Cotabato showed how regional pageants can become powerful venues for advocacy and expressions of cultural pride. Their speeches demonstrated that compelling discourse in pageantry is not simply about grace or stage presence but also emotional depth, cultural connection, and alignment with community values. These rhetorical strategies allowed the contestants to speak sincerely, grounding their advocacies in a language shaped by lived experiences and shared identity. As Perloff (2020) emphasizes, word choice is vital in emotional persuasion, influencing how audiences receive

and respond to messages. Gass and Seiter (2018) add that emotionally loaded language strengthens persuasion by resonating with listeners' moral and emotional frameworks—something these beauty queens clearly understood and applied with care.

Logical Reasoning (Logos) to Present Advocacy on Contemporary Issues

Logos, one of Aristotle's three modes of persuasion, refers to using logical reasoning, factual evidence, and structured arguments to support a claim and persuade an audience (Aristotle, trans. 2007). This rhetorical strategy is fundamental in effective discourse, as it enhances a speaker's credibility by presenting clear cause-and-effect relationships, well-reasoned arguments, and data-driven conclusions (Toulmin, 2003). A strong use of cause-and-effect argumentation helps audiences understand how specific actions lead to outcomes, thereby reinforcing the logic of the speaker's position.

Cause-and-Effect Argument

A cause-and-effect argument is a foundational element of logical reasoning that enables speakers to establish direct relationships between actions and their outcomes. This form of reasoning is central to Aristotle's rhetorical strategy of logos, emphasizing rationality, coherence, and the persuasive power of structured argumentation (Aristotle, trans. 2007). In persuasive discourse, especially within public speaking or advocacy contexts such as beauty pageants, contestants often utilize cause-and-effect arguments to justify their claims, promote specific policies, or advocate for social change.

Toulmin (2003) noted that strong arguments rely on clear connections between data and claims, supported by warranted reasoning. Beauty pageant discourse might include statements such as "If we invest in youth empowerment programs, we will develop future leaders" or "Combining agriculture and tourism will boost economic sustainability and cultural preservation."

The following are the excerpts:

"That's why, I can see this province 10 years from now a more progressive because therefore in a diverse culture that we have, it is only showing by appreciation, respect, tolerance, and acceptance of different cultures." (Mutya H)

Mutya H emphasized that Cotabato's future progress is rooted in its cultural diversity, identifying values such as "appreciation, respect, tolerance, and acceptance" as drivers of social harmony. Mutya I articulated how integrating agriculture and tourism can lead to recreation, income, and food security. At the same time, Mutya F highlighted how social media platforms can be used to preserve and promote Cotabato's cultural identity.

This reflects a noteworthy shift in how beauty pageant contestants—particularly at the regional level—engage with public discourse. Their use of logos signals a growing emphasis on evidence-based advocacy and meaningful civic involvement. It suggests that these young women confidently embrace roles as leaders and changemakers, presenting grounded, actionable visions for community development, environmental sustainability, and cultural preservation. This rhetorical style echoes Toulmin's (2003) model of argumentation, which highlights the importance of data-supported, logically sequenced claims in persuasive speech. It also aligns with today's expectations of public figures—especially beauty queens—not merely as symbols of elegance but as articulate, informed, and proactive voices working toward tangible progress in their communities.

Examples

Examples serve as powerful tools in rhetorical strategy, enhancing clarity, engagement, and persuasive impact by providing concrete illustrations of abstract ideas. In rhetorical strategy, examples function to clarify and build trust and familiarity with the audience, making complex concepts more accessible and grounded in real-life experience. According to rhetorical strategy theory, they represent a form of inductive reasoning—where individual cases or specific instances are used to support broader generalizations—thus strengthening the speaker's logical appeal (logos) and making arguments more relatable and convincing (Perloff, 2020).

The following are the excerpts:

"We all know that Cotabato is a melting pot of culture. We are celebrating different traditions, different cultures." (Mutya F)

Mutya F cited "different traditions" and "different cultures" to justify her statement that Cotabato is a "melting pot of culture." These statements reflect the candidates' intent to ground their arguments in observable realities, allowing audiences to follow a clear chain of reasoning. Rather than relying solely on emotion or authority, using concrete examples helped clarify the scope and substance of their claims, thereby enhancing their logical appeal. This approach implies elevating the discourse within pageantry by showing that contestants can present evidence-based perspectives. This strengthens their credibility and positions them as thoughtful advocates who can speak intelligently about development, culture, and community welfare.

Beauty queens use logical reasoning (logos) to present their advocacy on contemporary issues by offering clear cause-and-effect relationships, citing real-life examples, and outlining actionable solutions. They often explain how specific programs, such as youth development initiatives or agri-tourism efforts, lead to tangible benefits like empowerment, economic growth, or cultural preservation. They support their arguments with structure and coherence by presenting evidence through policy outcomes, statistics, or personal observations. This approach informs the audience and reinforces the speaker's credibility, showing that their advocacy is not just emotional or aspirational but grounded in rational, well-thought-out reasoning.

Conclusions

This study offers a timely reminder that meaningful education can thrive in unconventional spaces. Beauty pageants, often dismissed as superficial, can, in fact, become powerful platforms for expression, learning, and civic engagement. The contestants' voices in Mutya ng Cotabato reveal a profound capacity for reflection, leadership, and advocacy when individuals can speak from experience. Their use of rhetoric—rooted in authenticity, emotion, and logic—illustrates the potential of narrative to build identity and inspire change. These invite a reimagining of how they view youth development, not only within the confines of classrooms but in any space where confidence, communication, and cultural pride are nurtured. At its core, the study reflects the transformative power of voice, especially when young people are trusted to use it.

Based on the results of this study, the strategic use of rhetorical discourse in the Mutya ng Cotabato pageant offers valuable recommendations with practical applications across academic settings, the pageantry sphere, and training and development.

The study provides meaningful reflections on teaching and school leadership in academic settings. The speeches of the Mutya ng Cotabato contestants demonstrated how rhetorical strategies—particularly ethos, pathos, and logos—can be used not only for competition but also to articulate personal advocacies, values, and identity. This highlights the importance of integrating rhetorical training, critical communication, and narrative-building into classroom instruction. Teaching students to ground their arguments in personal experience (ethos), connect through emotion and shared values (pathos), and reason with evidence and logic (logos) can enhance their public speaking skills, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence.

From an administrative perspective, the results underscore the value of co-curricular programs—such as debate teams, public speaking contests, cultural showcases, and student leadership seminars—that foster persuasive communication and civic participation. Schools can collaborate with local events like pageants to embed values-based learning and student voice into the educational experience. Educational leaders are encouraged to see platforms like Mutya ng Cotabato not simply as cultural exhibitions but as meaningful extensions of leadership training, identity exploration, and public engagement. When students are empowered with the skills and opportunities to express themselves meaningfully, they develop into confident communicators and socially aware citizens—outcomes that align with transformative, inclusive education goals.

In the world of beauty pageants, the study reaffirms the growing significance of these events as platforms for social dialogue and advocacy—the intentional use of rhetorical strategies positions contestants as performers, articulate advocates, and cultural representatives. Pageant organizers are encouraged to design segments beyond surface-level presentation, highlighting governance, sustainability, and identity themes. Pageants can serve as alternative civic spaces, mirroring public discourse and encouraging community leadership.

For trainers and mentors in the pageant industry, the findings call for a deeper emphasis on communication and rhetorical skills. Training should go beyond stage presence and include instruction in persuasive messaging, argument structure, and audience connection. By teaching contestants how to build compelling narratives, evoke emotional resonance, and present logic-based arguments, they are better prepared to emerge as credible, passionate voices in public spaces. This approach transforms pageantry from a visual spectacle into a platform of substance, where beauty is complemented by intellect, advocacy, and leadership.

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Affiliations and Corresponding Information

Aileen D. Escote

Notre Dame of Midsayap College – Philippines

Michelle T. Viña

Notre Dame of Midsayap College – Philippines